(c) its impact thereof on defence, railways etc.?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI PRAHLAD SINGH PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir. The Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Amendment Bill, 2000 which was introduced in the Rajya Sabha on 24.4.2000, seeks to amend the Coal Mines (Nationalisation) Act, 1973 with the following objectives:

(i) To allow the Indian companies to mine coal and lignite without the existing restriction of captive consumption;

(ii) To allow the Indian companies in the public and private sector to be engaged in exploration of coal and lignite resources in the country.

(b) The demand and supply gap of coal is increasing year by year and it is not likely that the nationalised coal companies shall be able to bridge this huge gap. It has therefore been decided by the Government to augment production of coal in the country by associating the private sector to ensure adequate availability of coal to the needy sectors and promote competition, efficiency and ensure improved quality of product and services to the consumers.

(c) Coal Mining is carried out subject to the existing rules and regulations, which address safety, problems of workers, environmental concerns and concerns related to location of defence installations etc. As for railways, the likely demand on railways for transportation of coal may go up after the private sector is allowed commercial mining of coal.

Non-recovery of electricity charges from the employees of South Eastern Coalfields Ltd.

1549. SHRI MURLI DEORA: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state:

(a) whether South Eastern Coalfields Ltd. provided residential quarters to its employees who were required to pay electricity charges beyond the consumption of 30 units per month as per the National Coal Wage Agreements;

(b) if so, whether no charges towards the consumption of electricity were recovered from the employees between April, 1999 to March, 2002 and if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether the amount involved as a result of non-recovery of electricity charges has been recovered; and

(d) if not, the reasons and the persons responsible therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRI PRAHLAD SINGH PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) As reported by Coal India Limited, charges for excess consumption over 30 units could not be recovered as the company was unable to ascertain actual consumption due to non-installation of individual meters in these quarters. However, in case of executives, 1% of basic pay is being recovered towards electricity charges, if quarters are provided.

(d) Since the practice is continuing from prior to nationalisation in the CIL subsidiaries, it is not possible to fix responsibility at subsidiary level. The management has deliberated this issue with the workers' representatives at different levels but the latter categorically opposed any curtailment of benefits already being availed by them.

Accident in Singareni Collieries Mines

1550. SHRI LALIT SURI: Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to refer to the reply to Starred Question 48 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 23rd July, 2003 and state:

(a) whether it is a fact that another serious accident occurred in a mine of the Singareni Collieries on the night between the 16th and 17th October, 2003;

(b) if so, the details thereof, indicating the number of mine workers who died/injured in the accident; and

(c) whether inquiry into the mishap has been conducted; if so, the outcome thereof and action taken thereon?